

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TOKYO 17043 161013Z

22

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /057 W

----- 116385

R 160920Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3633

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 17043

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJECT: THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP--THE COMING STRUGGLE

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER MIKI'S LDP RIVALS HAVE MOUNTED THREE MAJOR EFFORTS TO UNSEAT HIM. FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, EACH HAS FAILED. THERE IS NOW A FORMAL PARTY ORGANIZATION COMMITTED TO ELECTING FORMER DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FUKUDA AS NEW LDP PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER AFTER THE DECEMBER 5 ELECTION. FUKUDA IS PRESENTLY ENGAGED IN KEEPING THE ORGANIZATION TOGETHER AND CREATING CONDITIONS FOR A POST-ELECTION TRANSFER OF POWER. MIKI REMAINS AS INTENT AS BEFORE TO REMAIN IN POWER AND HAS ALREADY LEVELED A CHALLENGE AT HIS RIVALS BY STATING THAT AN LDP ELECTORAL WIN OF SOME 271 SEATS WOULD CONSTITUTE A MANDATE FOR HIS CONTINUATION IN OFFICE. HE IS COUNTING ON PRECEDENT, MEDIA SUPPORT AND THE FICKLENESS OF POLITICAL ALLIANCES. NEITHER CONTESTANT IS CERTAIN HIS STRATEGY WILL SUCCEED. OPINION IS DIVIDED, BUT INCLINES SLIGHTLY TOWARD FUKUDA. IT IS FAIRLY CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT AN LDP FAILURE TO WIN 271 SEATS WOULD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TOKYO 17043 161013Z

RESULT IN A MIKI RESIGNATION. AN LDP "VICTORY" WOULD

LEAD TO A MAJOR CONTEST. WE EXPECT LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE TO PEAK IN MID-DECEMBER. END SUMMARY.

1. BACKGROUND: SINCE LAST MAY PRIME MINISTER MIKI'S ENEMIES WITHIN THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP) HAVE MOUNTED THREE SERIOUS EFFORTS TO UNSEAT HIM. FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS--LACK OF A CREDIBLE EXCUSE FOR REMOVING HIM, HIS OWN DETERMINATION TO STAY ON, THE PREROGATIVES OF OFFICE, INABILITY OF ANTI-MIKI FORCES TO AGREE ON A SUCCESSOR, MEDIA AND POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MIKI, ETC.--THESE MOVES ENDED IN FAILURE. ANTI-MIKI FORCES HAVE, HOWEVER, MADE PROGRESS. A FORMAL ORGANIZATION, THE "PARTY UNITY COUNCIL," GREW OUT OF LATE AUGUST-EARLY SEPTEMBER EFFORT TO UNSEAT MIKI, AND IN LATE OCTOBER THIS GROUP, CONSISTING OF SOME TWO-THIRDS OF ALL LDP DIETMEN, FORMALLY ENDORSED FUKUDA TO SUCCEED MIKI AS PARTY PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER. UNTIL NOW MIKI'S ENEMIES HAVE BEEN FRUSTRATED BY INABILITY TO FIND WAY TO FORCE HIM TO RESIGN. CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT THAT A CABINET RESIGN AFTER A GENERAL ELECTION, HOWEVER, CREATES CONDITIONS THAT COULD ALLOW FUKUDA TO REPLACE MIKI WHEN DIET MEETS TO ELECT NEW PRIME MINISTER.

2. FUKUDA STRATEGY: WHILE NOMINALLY FUKUDA CANDIDACY TO SUCCEED MIKI IS SUPPORTED BY TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY OF LDP DIETMEN, ANTI-MIKI COALITION IS STILL FRAGILE. IN ORDER TO HOLD IT TOGETHER AND COMMAND CONTINUING LOYALTY OF THESE SUPPORTERS, FUKUDA APPARENTLY FELT COMPELLED TO MAKE A DRAMATIC--AND IRREVOCABLE--BREAK WITH MIKI AND DEMONSTRATE HIS DETERMINATION TO CONTEST FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. HE DID THIS BY RESIGNING FROM THE CABINET ON NOVEMBER 5 AND PERSONALLY TAKING CHARGE OF ANTI-MIKI MOVEMENT. TO SHORE UP HIS SUPPORT FURTHER AND ESTABLISH IDENTITY DISTINCTLY SEPARATE FROM MIKI, FUKUDA HAS DESIGNED A CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE THAT WILL GIVE HIM MAXIMUM EXPOSURE, PIN DOWN LOYALTY OF ANTI-MIKI DIETMEN BY SPEAKING ON THEIR BEHALF, AND LAY GROUNDWORK FOR DENYING THAT AN LDP ELECTION VICTORY WOULD BE MANDATE FOR MIKI. IN ADDITION, FUKUDA HAS BEGUN TO SPEAK OF THE NEED FOR PARTY REFORM--IMPOSSIBLE UNDER MIKI, HE CLAIMS--

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TOKYO 17043 161013Z

AND FOR A THOROUGH HOUSECLEANING IN HOPE OF POLISHING HIS LEADERSHIP IMAGE. FUKUDA SOURCES ARE CONFIDENT THAT FUKUDA-OHIRA PARTNERSHIP IS FIRM, THAT THE SUPPORTERS ARE FULLY BEHIND FUKUDA AND THAT MIKI WILL SIMPLY BE REPLACED BY LDP CAUCUS PRECEDING THE OPENING OF DIET.

3. MIKI STRATEGY: MIKI'S STRATEGY IS BASED PARTLY ON PRECEDENT--NO POSTWAR INCUMBENT LDP PRIME MINISTER HAS

BEEN UNSEATED IN WAKE OF A "SUCCESSFUL" GENERAL ELECTION--AND PARTLY ON HIS ASSESSMENT THAT POLITICAL ALLIANCES AND MOODS ARE FICKLE. HE IS ALREADY ON RECORD THAT HE WOULD REGARD AN LDP WIN OF 271 SEATS AS MANDATE FOR HIS CONTINUATION IN OFFICE. IF ELECTION RESULTS WERE TO EXCEED THIS, HE WILL VIGOROUSLY ASSERT THIS LINE AND APPEAL FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC-OPINION SUPPORT, ARGUING THAT, DESPITE LOCKHEED, HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO LEAD PARTY TO AN ELECTION "VICTORY." MIKI IS HOPING THAT POST-ELECTION MOOD WILL PUT BRAKES ON FUKUDA'S EFFORTS TO TOPPLE HIM AND THAT, DESPITE PRESENT NUMBERS STACKED AGAINST HIM, HE WILL BE ABLE TO PERSUADE MAJORITY OF LDP DIETMEN--PARTICULARLY JUNIOR MEMBERS MORE DEPENDENT ON MIKI'S "CLEAN" IMAGE--TO ACQUIESCE IN HIS CANDIDACY. HE IS CONFIDENT OF HIS ABILITY TO FORESTALL OR CONTROL POST-ELECTION EXTRAORDINARY PARTY CONVENTION (AS OPPOSED TO DIET-MEMBER CAUCUS) WHICH FUKUDA SOURCES HAVE DEMANDED. FINALLY, HIS PAST THREATS TO BOLT PARTY ARE CONSTANT REMINDER THAT, EVEN SHOULD FUKUDA BE ELECTED PRIME MINISTER, FUKUDA COULD BE FACED WITH THE PROSPECT OF HAVING TO GOVERN WITH A MINORITY GOVERNMENT.

4. CONCLUSIONS: NEITHER OF PLAYERS IN LEADERSHIP DRAMA ARE CERTAIN THAT THEIR STRATEGIES WILL PAY OFF AND OPINION IS DIVIDED AS TO WHO WILL EMERGE THE WINNER, ALTHOUGH MOST OBSERVERS NOW TEND TO GIVE FUKUDA A SLIGHT EDGE. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED, MIKI FACTION MEMBERS INCLUDED, THAT MIKI WOULD RESIGN IF LDP "LOST" THE ELECTION--I.E., GAINED LESS THAN 271 SEATS NECESSARY TO FILL ALL LOWER HOUSE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS--AND THAT FUKUDA WOULD THEN TAKE OVER. THIS IS SOMETHING OF A NUMBERS GAME, HOWEVER, INASMUCH AS ANYTHING LESS THAN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 TOKYO 17043 161013Z

275 SEATS, CONSIDERING 17 VACANCIES AND 20 NEW DIET SEATS CONTESTED FOR FIRST TIME THIS ELECTION, WOULD MARK AN LDP SETBACK. IF, AS IS EXPECTED, THE LDP GAINS MORE THAN 271, HOWEVER AND CERTAINLY IF IT GAINS MORE THAN 275 MIKI APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN TO MAKE A MAJOR FIGHT TO STAY IN OFFICE. IN SO DOING HE HAS DEMONSTRATED A WILLINGNESS TO FACE A SHOWDOWN THAT HAS YET TO BE TESTED IN FUKUDA. FUKUDA SUPPORTERS, FOR THEIR PART, WILL CLAIM THE ELECTION WAS AN ENDORSEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL DIET MEMBERS, NOT MIKI, AND IT IS UP TO THE FORMER TO SELECT THEIR LEADER. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON HOW THE ELECTION RESULTS ARE INTERPRETED AND WHO (MIKI OR FUKUDA) IS HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESULT. ANALYSIS IS FURTHER CLOUDED BY THE RUMORED POSSIBILITY OF A MIKI "SURPRISE" SUCH AS RESIGNATION ON THE HEELS OF AN

LDP "VICTORY" OR AGREEMENT TO STEP DOWN AT THE REGULAR
LDP JANUARY 1977 CONVENTION. THE LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE
WILL HEAT UP IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEC. 5 ELECTION.
WE ANTICIPATE IT TO BE SETTLED BY MID-DECEMBER.
HODGSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, POLITICAL STABILITY, ELECTIONS, PARTY FACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TOKYO17043
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760427-0048
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761143/aaaabksp.tel
Line Count: 174
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 26 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <26 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <16 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP--THE COMING STRUGGLE SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER MIKI'S LDP RIVALS HAVE MOUNTED THREE MAJOR EFFORTS TO UNSEAT HIM. FOR A VARIETY
TAGS: PINT, JA, (MIKI, TAKEO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006